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Book

A. H. Parker

Subject No.

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THE
IMPROPRIETY
OF
OPEN-COMMUNION,
CHICAGO LIBRARY
MIXED-COMMUNION,
BETWEEN
BAPTISTS
AND
PÆDO-BAPTISTS,

Jenkins, Joseph

IN THE

LORD'S SUPPER.

In a Letter to an Advocate for that Practice.

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal. ii. 11.

L O N D O N :

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THE
I M P R O P R I E T Y
O F
O P E N - C O M M U N I O N,
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M I X E D - C O M M U N I O N,
B E T W E E N
B A P T I S T S
A N D
P Æ D O - B A P T I S T S,
I N T H E L O R D ' S S U P P E R .

Seeing that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech. 2 Cor. iii. 13.

S I R,

EXCEPT the word *baptism*, there is not a word in the Bible more perverted and misunderstood, than the word *charity*. If a man conscientiously stand up for the doctrine and discipline of Christ, no term is so commonly applied to him as that of *Bigot*! even though he let other people think as they please, and abhor every idea of persecution. But if a man deny the doctrine of the *Trinity*, or any other fundamental of the gospel, immediately his adherents cry out, "O! 'he's a
" *very sensible and a very honest man, and you must have*
" *charity for people of different sentiments*;" the meaning of all which is, that we are to think it of no consequence,

quence, whether a man believe any thing or nothing, and is a complaisant method of betraying the gospel, like Judas did its Author, into the hands of its enemies; for it is not worth while to enquire into the external evidences of the Bible, if we may have no greater concern about ascertaining its contents. But you tell me, that the persons you are an advocate for communion with, *"Do not deny, but believe the fundamental truths of God's word;"* for however the most zealous defender of mixed communion in our day (I mean Mr. Robinson) maintains the perfect innocence of mental error, and his opinions on that subject lead to communion with an indiscriminate mixture, of all or of no sentiments, provided there be a passable moral character (and I am persuaded it is the only consistent length in which open communion can be maintained) you limit your charity, so as to *"allow only those who believe the doctrine of the divine person and righteousness of Christ, with the rest of the doctrines of free grace to be real Christians."* Here then, it seems, I am to set my foot and debate the matter with you. You assert, that *"there may be people enlightened into the belief and experience of the truth as it is in Jesus, who yet are not satisfied, that baptism was intended to be perpetuated beyond the Apostolic age, and who therefore cannot conscientiously be baptized."* Well. Suppose I were to admit this. What will you make of it? You can never prove from thence, that such persons have a right (in virtue merely of their faith) to go unbaptized to the Lord's Supper. No. The true argument will run thus: this people's faith does not extend to the two positive institutions of Christ; therefore keep them from the Lord's table, till they see into the duty of baptism, which, according to the scripture, always preceded it; for it is not more plainly said, *show forth the Lord's death until he come*, than it is, *preach to every creature* (consequently in all ages) *he that believeth is to be baptized*; and *Lo, I am with you alway* (consequently in adhering to this duty) *even unto the end of the world.* You add further,

"We

“ *We ought to hold communion with good people, who believe all the other truths of the gospel in common with ourselves; but think that they have been, to all good intents and purposes, baptized by sprinkling in their fancy.*” Here your chief stress is laid; and this will bring the debate into a yet narrower compass. I begin then with asking, Do you think infant-sprinkling to be in any sense baptism? As a Baptist you will answer, No. But you subjoin, “ *Baptism, or infant-baptism, is a matter non-essential and indifferent, in which good people may think and let think, and go cordially to the Lord’s Table together, which ever side they take.*” In opposition to this then (while I confess it is not my province to judge individuals, and I am willing to make all due allowances for early-received prejudices) I must insist, that the Baptists cannot too strenuously testify their dislike of infant-baptism, or what is so called, as a most pernicious error; and therefore, ought not, by any means, to countenance or have communion with them who adhere to it; because, *First*, Infant-baptism leads to a total subversion of the doctrines of Christ:—*Secondly*, The temper of its advocates is such, that there can be no mutual communion between them and the Baptists:—*Thirdly*, It overthrows the instituted order of gospel-worship, and refuses obedience to Christ as King in Zion.

First; Infant-baptism leads to a total subversion of the doctrines of the gospel of Christ. For the leading principles of the Christian-religion are, that all men by nature and practice, Jews and Gentiles, and one as much as another, are considered as sinners against God. The scripture hath concluded all under sin, and there is not in this respect the least difference in God’s sight; for though some have been kept beyond others, by the force of education, the workings of conscience, or the interpositions of a preventive Providence, from the open outrages of sin, the hand of God is to be regarded in these restraints; still the heart of one man is naturally as bad as that of another, and all are desperately wicked,

and

and obstinate as the horse or mule which have no understanding. Every sinner saved therefore is a brand plucked by sovereign grace, out of the burning ; and no flesh has any thing to boast of, either from himself or his ancestors, however godly ; but all are alike sinners, and indebted to mere mercy. Of consequence it is a fundamental article in the gospel, that a man is justified alone through the redemption and righteousness of Jesus, which shines gloriously as the righteousness of God in our nature, of the second Adam who is the Lord from heaven. Justification also is to be considered in two views ; at the bar of God, and in a man's own conscience. The latter is the evidence or earnest of the former ; for it is impossible for me to know that I am a justified person in God's sight, but as the Lord witnesses it to my mind, and gives me the discovery and comfort of it in the court of my own conscience. Faith therefore is the gift of God, through the operation of his Holy Spirit, whereby, in a man's soul he pronounces him a justified man ; and the *matter* which God makes use, and faith lays hold of for this purpose, is the same truth exactly, that has reconciled sinners in the court of heaven, I mean Christ's adorable righteousness as revealed in the word ; Christ's righteousness, sufficient for the pardon of the most guilty ; Christ's righteousness, held out freely to the vilest of men, and held out, as the *only* ground of a sinner's hope ; for if I mix any goodness, privileges or professions of my own, (be they what they may, or in whatever form they appear) with his righteousness, as the reason why I hope in him, or in any wise to prop up my comfort of interest in him, I affront Christ and put him from me ; my hope is not that of the gospel, but is built upon pride and self-righteousness ; will be wavering and unsteady in this life, James 1. 6. and will at last perish for ever : whereas, if my eye be single, my whole body will be full of light ; if Christ's righteousness be before me, as the tried and all-sufficient rest of a lost sinner, this will be an inexhaustible source of consolation, of joy solid and substantial ;

tial; a foundation durable as the rock of ages; and this hope always produced holiness of heart and life. The Apostles of Christ therefore spoke of nothing with so thorough an abhorrence, as that which would depreciate in the eyes of men, the glory of the person and righteousness of their Lord. Let it come in under ever so artful a pretence (of a regard for God's holy law, or, a zeal for the privileges of God's Children) or if even an Angel were the insinuator, they pronounced the doctrine to be false, and the preacher an accursed, lying, Spirit, that meant to deceive and ruin; nor were they jealous of any error compared to this, of corraupting the minds of men, from the simplicity of Christ's righteousness as their alone peace. But we all know, how the Jews and Judaizing teachers opposed, or would have perverted, this pure doctrine. They vainly imagined, that being Israelites, they had a greater title to God's goodness than Gentile sinners; some, that they had no need at all of Christ's righteousness; others, that they were better qualified for it, or recommended to it, than the rest of the world. Accordingly, they boasted of their circumcision (which was simply a mark of obligation *to do the whole law*, Gal. v. 3. or be condemned by it) as a mark of their being God's peculiarly spiritual people; and would fain have forced the Gentiles to be circumcised, that they might *glory in their flesh*, Gal. vi. 13. The chief argument for infant-baptism also being drawn, from a fancied analogy between it and circumcision, do not you see a vast likeness between these boastings of the Jews, and those in use amongst Pædo-baptists, concerning the privileges of the seed of believers? Cautiously as *some* do speak of infant-baptism, as no more than a token, that the children are members of the kingdom of Christ *at large* (which is saying nothing but that they have in common with others, the liberty of hearing God's word; and does not entitle to baptism) the greater part, if not all at particular seasons, speak of a something of God's goodness, which the children of believers have a *covenant-right*

nant-right in, that the seed of unbelievers are not possessed of, or entitled to; and that this *right* is sealed and confirmed to them in baptism. Hence infant-sprinkling is termed *a seal of the covenant of grace*, in which covenant it is roundly asserted, that a believer's children are included, by virtue of their parents faith; and being thus sealed in covenant with God, if a child die in infancy, the Minister comforts the parents, in private or over the grave, with the ground there is for believing the child is gone to glory (not from the general idea that a God of infinite goodness, who took him away in a state of unconsciousness, meant his happiness thereby; but, mark the reason) because the parents have been *wise enough to seal him in God's covenant*, and thereby it would seem have taken possession of heaven for him, the infant being himself incapable of doing it; while the Baptists, on the other hand, are spoken of as most inhuman wretches, who have no good hope of their children's salvation, nor any concern about it; because, though they pray for them, they do not profess to baptize them. Again; if the children of Pædo-baptists grow up into life, the parents are told, what a prevalent argument they have to use in prayer to God for them, and what ground for the belief that their prayers will be answered, and their children saved; because they are the seed of the faithful, and by baptism sealed in the covenant. If even they turn out wicked, still it is to be believed that the wandering sheep shall be brought back, because they were marked as God's in their infancy; and if the wanderers be reclaimed, that is not so much imputed to the free and unconditional grace of God to the offenders, as it is to the good effect of their parents faith, and their infant-sprinkling. But if the young persons appear sober, mind their business, and attend upon worship with decency, then all is presumed to be right; their morality is regarded as the fruit of the seed sown when they were christened; they are nursed up in an idea, that they are by birth and baptism, persons of greater excellency, and dearer to the Lord,

Lord, than the offspring of prophane people are; and it being rather taken for granted than minutely enquired into, whether they have received the grace of God *in truth*, they are (especially if they can chatter about the theory of gospel doctrines) readily admitted, as a matter of course, to church-communion, the *other seal* as it is expressed, the former having been received in infancy; and so they are, with very little trouble, compleated as Christians and professors of religion. But will you tell me, that such Christians have any real value for the righteousness of Christ? Is it Jesus alone that the man will look to for his comfort, who is taught that he is so privileged a person, in virtue of his birth and supposed baptism? Will such a man deem himself a poor perishing creature, the chief of sinners, and as a drowning wretch eagerly catch at the righteousness of Christ, for the support of his guilty soul from despair? Will he as a child of wrath, *even as others*, rejoice in Christ Jesus the Saviour from that wrath, *and have no confidence in the flesh*, Phil. iii. 3.? Will he walk humbly with God, and esteem others *better than himself*, Phil. ii. 3.? No, Sir. He will be more like the boasting Pharisee, than the self-condemned Publican, whose whole plea was *God be merciful to me a sinner*; and however, I confess, some of the Pædo-baptists do *talk* seemingly sound and orthodox upon the article of Justification, yet of necessity they must do it with a salvo, a *mental reservation*, of this infant-covenant, sealed and ratified in baptism, and so spoil all. Had the Apostle Paul lived in our day and seen these effects, what do you think he would have said of infant-sprinkling? Would he not have inveighed against it, as an attempt to pollute the pure river of water of life, and as not submitting to, but undervaluing the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3.? Would he not have declared against it, as an enemy to the Cross of Christ? Assuredly he would. And shall we account it a matter *innocent, non-essential, of perfect indifference*, &c. and mix in communion as a church of Christ, with them who contaminate

contaminate the true grace of God? How will the Church be *the pillar and ground of the truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15. if we thus connive at, or countenance such a contamination? If the chief doctrine of the gospel, that of Justification, be held in indifference, what chance have we of retaining the remainder? Rather, if this be taken away (or which is the same thing, corrupted by the insinuating leaven of infant-sprinkling) what other doctrine can be considered as of any consequence at all? It becomes us therefore to bear a steady protest against so dangerous a corruption, and hold no communion with its admirers. In matters of worldly property, people are usually jealous of the very smallest encroachments: and shall we not *contend earnestly* for the *faith* once delivered to the saints? If after duly weighing these thoughts you like mixed-communion, I shall pity you; but for my own part, knowing something of the preciousness of Jesus, I cannot; I consider infant-baptism as robbing Christ of his glory, and the reasonings of the Dissenters concerning it to be equally presumptuous, with the power assumed by the Church of England, of making a child by baptism a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; if the Dissenters cannot commune with this Church, because they judge its ceremonies and impositions to be unscriptural, I have a much more important reason for refusing communion with *them*, that I must *keep myself from idols*, 1 John, v. 21. and every thing is an idol which God has not given his authority for, and which tends, either directly or in its natural consequences, to set up any other hope than Christ Jesus. The Baptists do not baptize with the view of obtaining, or qualifying themselves by it for the favour of God; but because they, *as sinners, have received mercy*, and because Christ has commanded them to do it, in token of their gratitude for that mercy. I observed also,

II. That the temper of the Pædo-baptists is such, that there can be no mutual communion between them and

the Baptists. Sir, you know that communion at the Lord's table implies, not only that between God and a man's own soul, but also that between him and the people he sits down with; they eat of one bread, they are supposed to have drunk into one spirit, and to be united in the most cordial manner, as brethren and sisters in Christ. But it seems to me impossible, that Baptists and Pædobaptists can thus affectionately unite; they are, like oil and water, heterogeneous substances that cannot consolidate into one body, however they be comprehended in one church. How can a Baptist coincide with those that, we have mentioned already, do corrupt the gospel? Or though the Baptist do cringe, and endeavour to gain the good-will and christian love of the Pædobaptists, the latter will always look upon him with an evil eye, and have a private grudge against him, or jealousy of him. Indeed were I proudly left to imagine, that my faith entitled my children to spiritual blessings, or that I was capable of sealing my children in covenant with God, and thereby stipulating with God for them, no doubt I should hate the Baptists, who maintain, as Christ and his Apostles did, that the children of believers, *as such*, are no more in covenant with God than those of unbelievers. Accordingly, I am well acquainted with many facts, that fully authenticate these remarks. Mr. *Hitchin*, an Independent minister, was totally and avowedly against mixed communion, so afraid was he lest his people should become Baptists, as are some others of that denomination. And if Pædobaptists be in a Baptist-church, it gives them no pleasure to behold sinners converted and baptized; it rather creates disgust. But if a Pædobaptist propose and be received, it gives amazing pleasure, and immediately it is perceivable that they understand one another, and are a separate party in the church; or if such a member be proposed and not received, the scruple is not believed to be, that the church wishes to have better proof of the man's real piety; but it is surmised as the true reason, that *he is not a Baptist*;

so that I have known churches before now, obliged to take persons in, even against their own judgments, for fear of offending the Pædo-baptist members.—This antipathy is also to be suspected, when they seem and speak the most smoothly, for it has always been found if they were capable of taking any advantage, however unfair or disingenuous against the Baptists, that they greedily embraced it; and it appeared demonstrably plain to have been the intention, in a particular instance I could specify, where certain Pædobaptists refused to join a Baptist-church, because they found out by some accident, that the Trust-deed of the place of worship had provided, that the minister should always be a Baptist; but if they could have had that article expunged or over-ruled, a whole shoal of them would, for obvious reasons, have joined forthwith.—Not many years ago a Baptist church, allowing of mixed-communion, having two or three before them who proposed for admittance, after the account of their experiences was finished, the minister enquired, “Did they or did they not wish to be baptized?” And being answered in the affirmative, he added, that he hoped it was from a conviction of the propriety of baptism; for that he did not wish any (as he termed it) to *submit* to it, who was not rationally persuaded it was his duty and privilege. Innocently and undefigningly as these words were uttered, the wrath excited in the other party was so excessive, that one of the Pædobaptists stood up, and with shut-fist exclaimed against minister and people; concluding with, “*I defy you all to prove, that the seed of believers are not in the covenant of grace with their parents.*”—When we go to hear a Pædobaptist minister, we must have patience to hear him; if it fall in his way, direct parents to plead with God the infant-covenant and baptism, in behalf of their children; and roundly tell the children, how much more account God makes of *them*, than of the seed of infidels and wicked people. But if a Baptist minister happen to touch upon baptism, though faithfulness to his text unavoidably lead

him to it, and though he cast no reflections upon infant-sprinkling, but incidentally illustrates his own subject; O! the dissatisfaction, the uneasiness expressed by the other side of the question. "*Aye, He begins to preach about baptism.—We'll leave him,*" &c. so that a minister is hampered; some parts of God's holy word he must not preach upon; some duties he must not enforce, lest he risque the friendship and support of his Pædobaptist members. I am sorry also to say (and ashamed of them of whom I speak it) that there are some who call themselves (not properly) Baptist ministers, who, to say the best of them, prefer the friendship and countenance of Pædobaptists to their duty. Why else do they, for the sake of mixed-communion, or for retaining their opulent hearers, make such collusive bargains as this about an ordinance of Christ? "*That they will never speak of or for believer's baptism, or against that of infants, in the pulpit, or the church, or any other public exercise of their ministry with that people*"? Why do such temporizing preachers accordingly, when a person is to be baptized, give notice of it to the Baptists *in a whisper*; and at the time, sneak out at day-break and through a back-door (as if they traded in *smuggled goods*: or had some shameful action to perpetrate) and baptize the party privately, in some unfrequented corner of an orchard adjoining to a river, instead of manfully avowing Christ's ordinance in the face of the world? They could do no otherwise in the very heat of persecution. We have a remarkable instance of such a bargain not far from us, which is enough to sicken a conscientious man of mixed-communion; an instance in which two Pædo-baptist ministers in a certain town, "*think it their duty*" to preach, and one to print, zealously in defence of infant-sprinkling; but the Baptist minister (poor man!) has his hands and tongue tied, that he dare do neither, because it is contrary to his church-covenant, and will disoblige some of his best subscribers. I do not wish to make ill-natured comparisons; but I confess, when I hear of these and the like concessions,

sions, they irresistibly force upon me the idea, of Solomon's complaisance to the idolatry of his strange wives, and how their zeal for their false worship, reproached his indifference for the true. There is a consistency in being *cold* or *hot*; but none in being *neither cold nor hot*. The Pædo-baptists are not so lukewarm in regard to their principles. Happy are they too, when they hear of, or can foment discord or divisions in a Baptist church. Instead of discountenancing disorders, they will receive and openly encourage those that furiously rend themselves away, or, as I could prove have been put away, by the Baptists, for immoral practices. It cannot but strike you also, that while they entertain such a temper, they shake hands with the church of *Rome*. acknowledge the sprinkling performed by a Popish-priest to be, in every respect, valid baptism, and abuse the Baptists, as separatists from the catholic church of Christ, for not being of the same opinion. (See Mr. *Henry's Treatise*, lately published, p. 212.) How could you ever imagine there can be christian cordiality and communion, between us and people so opposite? But if this be not sufficient, I will add,

III. That infant-sprinkling overthrows the *order* of gospel-worship, and therefore I cannot unite in communion with them who practise it. The doctrines of free-grace, imbibed as we have said in the soul, are not intended to remain there inactive, but to bring forth fruit unto God; and if to God, then this fruit must be in God's way; for as it is absurd to suppose he has left us without a rule to go by, so if we walk according to any rule but what he has laid down in his word, we *dishonour*, not *glorify* him; and the more attached we are to any human invention, the more we disregard God our maker, and the authority of Jesus as king in Zion. Now God is a God of order; and his order has beauty as well as importance in it. You and I think so of the *doctrines* of revelation; so that if a preacher, under pretence of promoting piety, were merely to urge the practice of good works, and propose them as the ground of comfort that we

we are in a converted state, you would reply, " The *first* " command is to believe on the Son of God ; and until " that be the case, no works are properly good, or marks " of conversion." Is not order to be observed also in the worship of the gospel? And as there is not an example in scripture, of any persons baptized but who professed to believe, or of any going to the Lord's Supper, who were not upon a profession baptized, does not infant-sprinkling evidently invert, and overturn, this beautiful fabric of gospel-worship ; lay waste the fences of Zion, and open a road for encroachments of the worst nature? In truth, mixed-communion appears most shapelessly and ridiculously informal, to many of the Pædo-baptists themselves. " Here, says one sometime ago, is a man brought " into a christian church whom you think unbaptized: " In time perhaps, he becomes a Baptist, and is bap- " tized. Then you do in effect cast him out of the " christian church, and receive him in again by bap- " tism ; for how can a man be of the *church of Christ*, " (that is *professedly* a christian) unless he be baptized"? But fond as the friends of infant-baptism are of analogies, and hard-pressed as that weak one from circumcision is, in order to squeeze out some semblance of proof from scripture, I have thought of an analogy, which *has* a scriptural foundation, which will clearly illustrate this point of gospel-order, and which will include both the sorts of people you speak of ; those who scruple baptism wholly, and them who plead for infant-baptism. You well know that the union between Christ and his church is often in scripture termed a *Marriage*, and the church is stiled the *Bride*, the *Lamb's-wife*. It is foreign to my purpose to consider here, how that union stood in the mind and counsel of God, before we existed, or creation had a Being ; there is a moment in a believer's experience, when drawn by the word and spirit of God, he sees the beauty of Christ, is won over to trust his soul composedly into his hands, and yields himself to him as alive from the dead. This is, in one view, the time of the soul's

secret

secret espousal to Christ : baptism is the public avowal of that secret transaction : and there is a plain parallel between this ordinance and a public celebration of marriage, which is in consequence of a previous affection, and *private contract* between the parties. Let me then candidly suppose a number of people in any place, of which the majority was against any public or open contract of marriage, and said, they made it a matter of conscience for each couple to go together without any such ceremony. And what if a minority were to object, “ *’Tis irregular and indecent* ” ? the majority would no doubt reply, “ *We make as good husbands and fathers as you do ; what need to be always harping upon this string, MARRIAGE ! MARRIAGE* ” ! The minority would answer, “ *You may be good fathers, and what you call good husbands ; but all your goodness subsequent to your going together is defective, for want of this FIRST, public, authorized contract MARRIAGE.* ” *Pish !* would the majority say, “ *Mutual love is the alone essence of marriage ; can’t you keep company with us, for all we are not formally married ; considering also that it is with us a matter of conscience* ” ? And how would such a minority be laughed at, by the more numerous admirers of the other flesh-pleasing system ! Now, to apply these remarks to baptism : if the above reasoning of the majority would be indelicate, is it not equally so to urge pleas of conscience, to evade a plain precept that Christ has ordained, as the *first* and leading duty in entering upon a public profession of religion, or avouching Jesus to be our husband ? But suppose the majority should thus excuse themselves, “ *Our fathers told us, that they had made a contract between us in our infancy, and married us, upon condition we consented when we grew up* ” ? It would immediately be retorted, “ *Such a contract was none of your parents province ; it should be your own voluntary act, or it cannot be valid.* ” So neither is infant-sprinkling valid ; but is, in a religious sense, that same kind of blind, involuntary, irregular contract, that *infant-matrimony* would be, and

and equally destitute of what constitutes christian-baptism, as the other of what constitutes a lawful marriage. That man then who freely visited, who eat and drank, and lived upon terms of intimacy and friendship, with the disorderly people I have mentioned, would be justly reproached, as countenancing them in fornication. And do they not countenance *spiritual fornication*, Rev. xix. 3. who plead for mixed-communion? Would it be said of the former, that they despise an ordinance of God, *matrimony*, which (queer as certain forms may be) was instituted to prevent *confusion*? And do they not slight, or manifest indifference for Christ's ordinance of baptism, who allow of mixed-communion, and in *fact* promote *confusion* in the order of gospel-worship? If you think my simile an *homely* one, I only ask, whether it is not a just and a scriptural one? The more *home* then it speaks the better. I have but one other remark to make; that I should dislike mixed-communion, were it for nothing but this natural effect, that it causes people to be indolent in examining, whether baptism be a duty. They think they can get into a church without it; and are unwilling to ask, whether it be a command of Christ or not. That is the general temper in our day; and in apology they say, "Why, as to baptism, 'tis no matter; we can go to heaven without it, if we believe on Christ; baptism can't make us more christians than we are"; not considering, that baptism was not given to *make* people christians; but to *profess* ourselves christians; and if Christ has ordained a *particular method* of making this profession, he that thinks that method of small consequence, despiseth not a distinguishing tenet of a party of men, but despiseth an ordinance of God, and they who in any way aid or abet such indifference, discover ignorance of the *meaning* of christian-baptism, which holds up to our eyes, *as in a glass*, the *glory of the Lord Jesus*, and the happiness of them that believe on his name.

I am, &c. &c.

London, June 8th. 1786.

S. N.





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